

MEMO

TBD

TO: Larry D. Voyles, Director

FROM: Jim deVos, Assistant Director
Wildlife Management Division

PRESENTER: Amber A. Munig, Big Game Management Supervisor

TITLE: Consideration of Proposed Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9, for Spring 2017 Hunting Seasons.

DESCRIPTION: The Commission will consider and may vote to approve Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9 (spring turkey, spring javelina, spring buffalo, and spring bear) establishing seasons and season dates, bag and possession limits, permit numbers, and open areas for spring 2017.

DATE: July 13, 2016

Summary:

The following describes the Department recommendations for Commission Orders 5, 6, 8, and 9 (see attached proposed Commission Orders) for spring turkey, javelina, buffalo, and bear. An open house was held in each region where the public could review these hunt recommendations prior to the Commission meeting. The recommendations were also posted on the Department web site and press releases were provided to let the public know of their availability.

The Commission provided the Department with direction through the hunt guidelines approved in September 2015. The proposed Commission Orders (attached) were formulated in accordance with that guidance and any deviation is noted in the species-specific summaries below.

Commission Order 5 – Spring Turkey

For spring turkey seasons in 2016, the Commission authorized 5,415 limited weapon shotgun shooting shot hunt permit-tags and over-the-counter juniors-only seasons in specified units; however, due to complications with the online draw application process, 5,973 hunt permit-tags were issued. These draw hunts had 12,408 first choice applicants, 4,691 hunters that participated, and an average of 20% hunt success. These hunters spent 18,482 days hunting to harvest 916 turkeys. The preliminary 2016 tag sales data indicates 830 youth turkey nonpermit-tags and 779 archery nonpermit-tags were purchased. No harvest data is available for the 2016 youth or archery nonpermit-tag (over-the-counter) spring turkey hunts, as the tags sales have not been keyed therefore questionnaire could not be sent.

For 2017, spring limited-weapon-shotgun-shooting-shot seasons are recommended to decrease by 46 permits statewide for a total of 4,970. Units 1 and 27 again experienced high hunt success,

indicating healthy spring turkey populations following the 2011 Wallow Fire. Trend or average hunt success in Units 3C, 6A, 7, 9, 22, and 23 was below objectives therefore the recommendation is for permit reductions in these units. Most spring seasons permits are recommended during stratified seasons occurring April 28–May 4 and May 5–25 or May 5–25, 2017.

Spring seasons are recommended for Gould's turkeys in Units 29 and 30A, 31, 32, 33, 34A, 35A, and 35B. Gould's turkey permit numbers are recommended at 72, a 9-permit increase from last year. Unit 32 is recommended to be stratified into 2 hunts with 1 permit in each hunt; this is an increase of 1. The Department recommends continuing the Unit 33 South archery only hunt with 2 permits.

The Department recommends no change to permits in the stratified seasons in Unit 13B (north of Wolfhole-Jacobs Well Road) for the Rio Grande subspecies at 2 permits in each hunt.

Nonpermit limited-weapon-shotgun-shooting-shot-seasons for youth-only are recommended in Units 1, 4A, 4B, 5A, 5B, 7, 8, 10, 12A, and 27. These permits would be unlimited in number and could be purchased over-the-counter. For permitted spring juniors-only seasons, the Department recommends 330 permits in Units 3C, 6A, 6B, and 23. This is a 40-permit decrease from last year. Season dates for the juniors-only season are recommended to be April 21–27 and May 12–25, 2017.

Over-the-counter permits are recommended for archery spring turkey hunts in Units 1, 4A, 4B, 6A, 12A, 23, and 27. Archery seasons are recommended to occur May 12–25, 2017. Preliminary have data for 2016 is not available. In 2015, 0 turkeys were harvested during the archery over-the-counter season.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 5 – SPRING TURKEY, AS PRESENTED.**

Commission Order 6 – Spring Javelina

In 2016, 9,996 general season hunters harvested 2,364 javelina for a 24% hunt success, 4,684 HAM hunters took 1,048 javelina for a 22% hunt success, and 7,432 archery hunters harvested 2,318 javelina for a 31% hunt success. For youth, 1,030 youth-only hunters took 377 javelina for a 37% hunt success.

Due to complications with the online draw application process in 2016, the Department issued more hunt permit-tags for the general and youth seasons. For the general javelina hunts, the Commission authorized 11,471 hunt permit-tags while 11,724 were issued. For the youth javelina hunts, the Commission authorized 1,145 hunt permit-tags while 1,196 were issued.

The Department recommends continuing the annual bag limit of 2 for javelina in 2017. The recommended bag limit would allow for only 1 javelina to be taken with a permit for a given hunt number; subsequent permits would only be issued for a separate hunt number.

Permits (percentages) recommended for spring 2017 include 11,455 (41.5%) general, 5,505 (20.0%) HAM, 9,475 (34.4%) archery, and 1,145 (4.2%) youth-only. This is no change for general, 25-permit increase for HAM, 25-permit decrease archery, and no change for youth-only. When considering the 780 fall youth-only permits plus the 695 javelina companion tags to deer hunts authorized by the Commission for fall 2016, this brings the total allocation of juniors-only permits to 9.0% of the total permits recommended.

Archery seasons are recommended to occur during January 1–26, 2017, youth-only seasons during January 27–Feb 5, 2017, HAM seasons during February 10–20, 2017, and general seasons during February 24–Mar 2, 2017. Over-the-counter permits are recommended for archery hunts in Units 1–5, 7, 9, 11M, 25M, 26M, and 38M. Season dates for Units 1–5, 7, 9, and 11M correspond with other archery javelina season dates of January 1–31, 2017. For Units 25M, 26M, and 38M, the season is recommended to overlap the January and December archery deer over-the-counter seasons and run from January 1-31, 2017 and December 15-31, 2017. A yearlong general season with over-the-counter permits is also recommended for January 1–December 31, 2017 in the Mohawk Valley Hunt Area in Unit 41.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 6 – SPRING JAVELINA, AS PRESENTED.**

Commission Order 8 – Spring Bison

During spring 2016, 50 spring permits were authorized for the House Rock herd in Units 12A and 12B. All 30 hunters in the any bison hunt participated and 21 bulls were harvested. Data for the other 4 House Rock herd hunts are not available at this time.

The Department recommends 25 any bison permits for the House Rock herd for spring 2017, with season dates from January 1–June 1, 2017. The Department also recommends 2 other any bison and 2 adult cow only general hunts in June and July for a total of 24 permits. The House Rock Wildlife Area is excluded from the open hunt to provide this area as refugia for bison instead of the Grand Canyon National Park.

In 2016, 22 spring permits were authorized for the Raymond herd in Units 5A and 5B with all hunters being successful. The Department recommends, for spring 2017, 6 designated yearling hunts for a total of 18 permits. The Department is on track to replace the current Raymond Wildlife Area herd with bison of the Wind Cave National Park (WICA) lineage to contribute to the national effort to conserve the WICA lineage. The recommendation for the Raymond herd continues this effort.

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 8 – SPRING BISON, AS PRESENTED.**

Commission Order 9 – Spring Bear

Spring bear harvest is relatively low in Arizona with an average of 16 bears harvested annually the last 5 years. The Department recommends no changes to most seasons, season structures, female harvest limits, and permits for spring 2017. General bear hunts (Units 1, 2A, 2B, and 2C; 10, 18A and 19B; 17A, 17B, 18B, 20A and 20B; 19A; 22; 23N; 24A; 27; 29 and 30A; 31; 32; 34A; and 35A and 35B [except Fort Huachuca]) and archery (Units 3B and 3C and 33) are recommended as over-the-counter permits for the March 24–May 4 season. The Department recommends adding a season for Units 30B with a female harvest limit of 1 to this structure. The Department also recommends extending the season length for the Unit 27 hunt to close June 30. This will allow for additional opportunity in Unit 27 and may help address nuisance bear issues; however, this recommendation is outside of guidelines. On average, less than 6 bears have been harvested annually during this period, with few being female. Each hunt will have a female harvest limit, and any female bears taken during this time will apply to the annual female harvest limit that if met would close subsequent hunts.

Permitted general bear hunts are recommended in Units 6B (except Camp Navajo) and 33 with 5 permits and a female harvest limit of 1 in each unit. Permitted archery-only bears hunts are recommended in Units 3B and 3C, 4B, 22, 23N, 33, 34A, 35A, and 35B (except Fort Huachuca), and Fort Huachuca; total permits are recommended at 280. Over the last 5 years, about one third of the bears harvested during this later season are females.

Female harvest limits total 21 for general hunts and 13 for archery hunts (Fort Huachuca harvest limits are a subset of Unit 35A).

Recommendation:

The Department recommends that the Commission **VOTE TO ADOPT COMMISSION ORDER 9 – SPRING BEAR, AS PRESENTED.**

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Attachment